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draperies, is peculiar to the eleventh and twelfth centuries. But when the figures were very minute the enamellers of this period expressed the carnations by lines incised on the gilded metal, and the draperies are then colored by enamel; but if the whole of the little figures are engraved on a metal plate, the incisures are always filled with enamel.

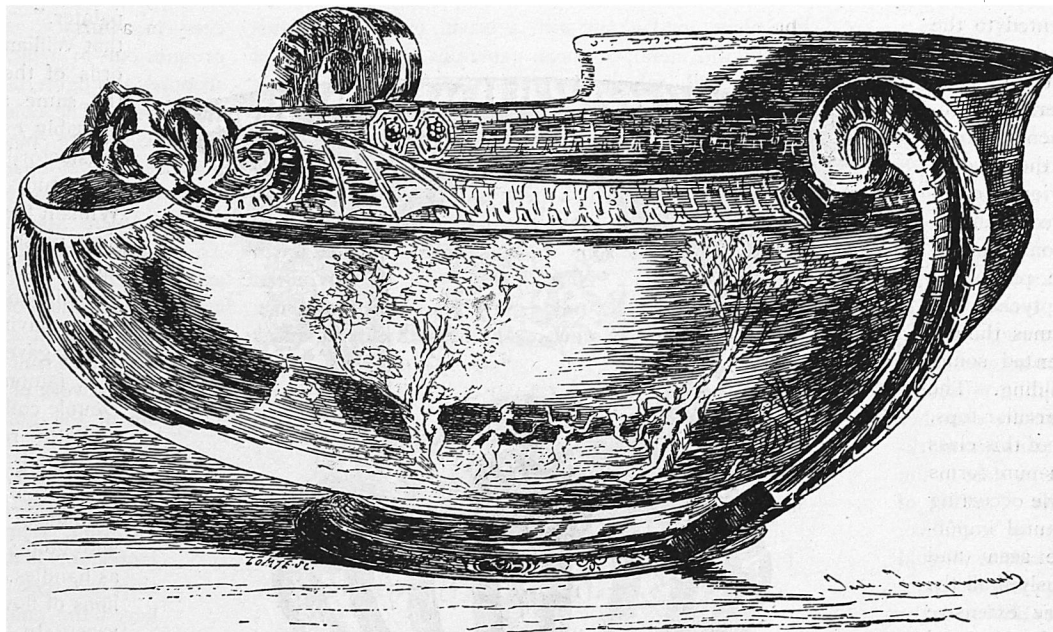
The *champlevé* enamels were extensively applied from the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries to a variety of copper utensils for secular life, such as coffers, candlesticks, arms, rings, and jewels; but more especially to objects used for ecclesiastical purposes, such as crosses, sacramental vessels, pastoral staves, and book-covers. The shrines which inclosed the reputed bones of saints and martyrs were in particular enriched with this beautiful incrustation, and even monuments of a larger size, such as tombs and altars. It is not surprising, therefore, that specimens of this manufacture are, comparatively speaking, common in public and private collections.

M. Labarte states, in his valuable article on enamels, that these enamels are always distinguishable from those incrustated by the *cloisonné* process, although the earlier *champlevé* enamels could not escape the prevailing Byzantine taste. The French archæologist and others claim for the *champlevé* process a strictly Western origin at a period when the art of enamelling did not exist in Italy and Greece, and long before, as he asserts, the Byzantines borrowed the *cloisonné* method from the Orientals. There is in the "Treatise upon Images" by Philostratus, a Greek by birth, but who afterward established himself at Rome, an allusion to enamelling as an art known only to "the barbarians living near the ocean, who pour colors on heated brass so that these adhere and become like stone, and preserve the design represented." Specimens of enamel have actually been found\* of the Gallo-Roman period, which agree perfectly with the narrative of this writer as regards the materials of their composition, and the localities in which they have been discovered. It may then, M. Labarte infers, be considered as established, that the art was unknown in Italy and Greece at the beginning of the third century of the Christian era, but that it was practised at this period in the industrial cities of Western Gaul. Limoges, albeit a Roman colony, may be presumed to have been one of these cities, although it is not historically known that enamelling flourished there till the eleventh century.

\* For instance, the pieces in the Bibliothèque Impériale at Paris, the one in the Museum at Poitiers, and a vase found in Essex.

#### MEDIÆVAL PANEL PAINTINGS.

THE art of the Middle Ages had a specific use. Artists did not paint, as now, on speculation. The uses to which the tabular or wooden pictures were applied suggested certain forms and modifications.



ROCK CRYSTAL NEF.

IN THE MUSEUM OF THE LOUVRE.

Altar-pieces were originally portable; which explains the practice of inclosing pictures in cases with doors, called diptychs, triptychs, or polyptychs, accordingly as they consisted of two, three, or many portions.

The diptychs are of very early date. They were among the Romans formed of two little tablets, of wood or ivory, folding one over the other like a book,

rior magistrates, on their elevation, to make presents of ivory diptychs carved externally with sculptures in bas-relief. On one leaf was carved the portrait and titles of the new consul, and on the other a mythological subject, or the games of the circus with which he had amused the people at the period of his elevation.

These interesting diptychs are known by the name of "consulares." At a later period, when the Roman empire had adopted the Christian religion, the consuls sent diptychs to the principal bishops also; and these, receiving them as a testimony of good-will and respect to the Church, placed the diptychs upon the altars, that the magistrates who gave them might be recommended to the prayers of the congregation at the celebration of mass. Such is the origin of ecclesiastical diptychs. The subjects of the carvings which enriched the exterior of these diptychs being taken from the New Testament, they appeared, after the fall of the Empire, very suitable for decorating the covers of books of prayers—to which use we owe the preservation of a great number.

The following difference existed between the Christian diptychs of this period and the Consular diptychs—namely, the principal representation of the former was inside instead of outside the covers. This difference, no doubt, arose from the desirability of folding up and concealing the contents of these portable diptychs in time of persecution. Afterward they were again exhibited on the altar open.

When the persecution had ceased, the use of these pictures (or sculptures) was universal, and continued in succeeding centuries. The crusader, the traveller, the poorest pilgrim, inclosed in diptychs and triptychs of wood and ivory the holy images he carried with him (as do the Russians to this day); and before which he daily prostrated himself, to offer his prayer to God. Some were also made of large dimensions, and placed over a "prie-dieu" or devotional chair in private rooms.

In the oldest triptychs the portions were united by hinges, and it was only at a comparatively late period that the chief portions of the altar-piece were separated by pilasters and bore heavy cornices. The outside of the simple folding-doors had, almost universally, subjects painted on them in

black or brown and white, probably from a traditional imitation of the sculptured back of the original diptych.

The form of the triptych when opened suggested what is called the "retable," or "retablement," which is flat and does not admit of being closed. As altar-pieces became more decorative, certain supplementary



ROCK CRYSTAL VASE AND GLASS.

IN THE IMPERIAL "SCHATZKAMMER" AT VIENNA.

and the interior presented a surface of wax prepared for writing. These tablets, or "pugillares," as they were called, sometimes served, when sealed, for conveying secret messages; but they were soon employed for a more interesting purpose. From the time of the emperors, it was the custom for the consuls and supe-

or complementary pictures were painted on the "predella." The predella or "gradus" was the wooden base (on the top and back of the altar) on which the altar-piece rested, and to which it was attached. On this panelling were depicted in miniature different events in the life, or other circumstances connected with the saint or divine personage represented above on the altar-piece proper. When—as it frequently was—the altar-piece was presented to the church the heraldic arms of the donor were often added to the extremities of the predella in addition to his portrait, generally introduced into one of the compartments above. As the decorative capabilities of these works became recognized, they were variously ornamented, and their frames assumed architectural importance—the architectonic enrichments following the taste of the place and period. The original Roman diptychs were generally rectangular, but sometimes the upper edges are raised and ornamented somewhat like the tympanum of a building. The Byzantine diptychs have often circular tops. Later Italian and German works of this class commonly finish in more or less pure forms of Gothic; the early decorated style occurring most frequently. The architectural importance of an altar-piece may be seen (and would be still more advantageously if all the portions were united) in the very extensive retable by Andrea Orcagna in the National Gallery in London. A picture by Jacopo di Casentino, in the same collection, is a still more elaborately constructed though less extensive altar-piece. It has gables and medallions or roundels, a predella and side projections, or buttresses, which are adorned with panels in different tiers, containing small full-length figures, which arrangement serves to account for the immense number of similar small paintings of secondary merit dispersed in various places and assignable to this period. The great altar-piece of the Van Eycks at Ghent is a polyptych (that is, of more than three leaves). It originally consisted of two tiers of leaves, seven above and five below. Of the seven, three were fixed, and the portions closing upon them were divided on each side into two subjects. Of the five, one large centre subject was fixed, and two leaves (one on each side) closed upon it.

The older method of artistic arrangement in pictures of this description was to place the principal subject in the centre, and single figures of saints on the doors. The figures of saints and evangelists were, however, soon brought into the centre picture, which generally represented the enthroned Madonna or Christ holding a globe termed a "majesty." The saints were also greatly increased in number, and groups belonging to different periods were introduced to share in this presumed heavenly adoration. Hence the origin of the *Sacra Conversazione*.

We have glanced at the practice of presenting pictures as offerings to a particular church. These were frequently simple panels. Such panels were inserted in the sides of shrines and reliquaries, as they were also in coffers, furniture, and domestic utensils. The numerous side chapels of churches were of course dedicated to various saints, hence those votive pictures frequently contained a confused jumble of incredibly ludicrous, and not unfrequently even indecent, representations of various events in the life of the patron saint, painted often with Chinese disregard of relative proportion. At other times the commemorative tablet recorded some local legend or fact.

There was yet another, and in some respects a more important class of panel pictures—the altar "frontals" or "antependia." These altar-facings were movable, and, according to the usage of the Church of Rome, four or five of them were provided for each altar, in order that they should harmonize in subject with the nature of the sacred office to be performed. These

frontals being, from their position, very conspicuous, the highest order of ability was engaged for them; and from extant examples, no decoration appears to have been too costly, and no material too rich, to lavish on their embellishment. To prove this, we need only refer to the precious "palliotto" at Venice, the golden casing of St. Ambrogio at Milan, and the silver, gold, and enamelled antependia of the altars of San Giovanni

English were under great obligations to Italian artists. In this frontal the processes are exactly similar to those of the early Florentines; and curiously enough, in the Close Rolls of the 44th of Henry III. (1260), is to be found a mandate from the king commanding the sheriff of Surrey to cause that "immediately the pictures and frontal of the altar of the great chapel at Guildford be made as we have instructed William of Florence our painter." From this mandate, it is inferred that William the Monk, mentioned in the records of the decorations at Westminster, is the same artist, and that this frontal was probably executed by him. It is, however, satisfactorily proved in Gage Rokewode's "Account of the Painted Chamber," that William the Monk of Westminster was a distinct person from William of Florence; and more than this, that while the latter was only paid sixpence a day, William of Westminster was receiving two shillings.

We gave last month an illustration of one of a famous pair of Sèvres vases from the Double collection lately sold in Paris. Here with the reader will find illustrated another interesting vase from the same collection. This is of old Sèvres, soft paste, with a ground of bleu de Vincennes, vermiculated with gold; branches of flowers in relief serve as handles, and there are polychrome medallions of flowers on the sides and foot of the vase. In the Double collection it held a bouquet of Sèvres porcelain flowers, and stood on a base of rose-colored marble with rich mountings of chased and gilded bronze. The music-stand shown on this page, and the table and footstool on the opposite page, were also among M. Double's treasures. The Louis XVI. music-stand, of carved and gilded wood, is decorated with a lyre and branches of foliage on a ground of deep scarlet satin. The table, or flat-topped bureau, is of rosewood and satin-wood, with a covering of blue velvet, and profusely ornamented with engraved and gilded bronze. It belonged to the daughters of Louis XV., and came from the Château de Meudon. The footstool is covered with silk, showing

flowers on a deep scarlet ground; it belongs to the epoch of Louis XVI.

Porcelain, like other art work, is subject to the fashion of the day, and to corresponding fluctuations of prices. Chelsea, Bow, and other English marks were all the rage some years ago, but at present old Meissen takes the foremost rank with collectors. Groups and figures of Kändler's modelling, as well as the dinner and

tea services painted under Höroldt's, and later under Dietrich's direction, are most eagerly sought for. But although the prices now given for specimens of this kind appear very high, still they are about the same as those obtained by the Meissen factory for its choice productions more than a century ago. In *The London Magazine* of May, 1753, we read that table services were sold at from 100 to 1000 guineas and upward, and that single figures about fifteen inches high were rated from 16 to 20 guineas, and the smaller ones at £1 per inch of height, while figures and groups above fifteen inches were very much dearer. At the same period the entirely white Meissen porcelain, without the least painting on it, was the most esteemed of all. It was not permitted to be sold, but reserved for the king's use, and for presents to foreign princes. Long purses were wanted then, as now, to indulge in the decorative luxury of genuine old Meissen porcelain; and of

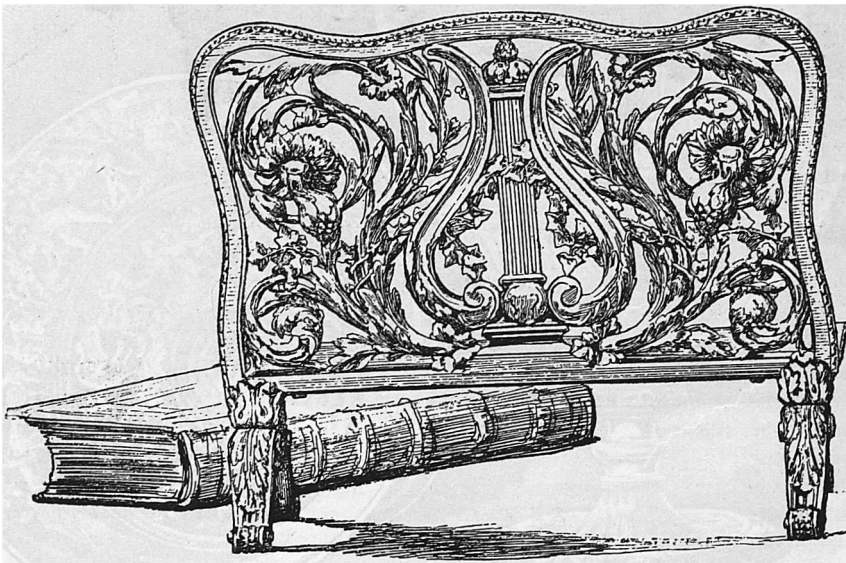
late, to meet the never-ceasing demand, innumerable spurious copies, imitations, and reproductions, bearing the old marks, are to be seen in the windows and show-rooms of dealers. Many of these pieces are shaped in the original moulds still extant, but the finish and refinement of decoration, one of the principal charms of old Dresden, is in most cases entirely wanting.



OLD SÈVRES VASE.

FROM THE DOUBLE COLLECTION

Batista at Florence, and San Giacomo at Pistoia. One beautiful specimen of a "precious frontal" is placed under glass in the south ambulatory or processional path next the choir in Westminster Abbey; though, situated as it is among the tombs, it may be mistaken for part of a monument. It is an extensive work, measuring about eleven feet in length and three in height. The paintings, on a gold mosaic ground, are



MUSIC-STAND OF CARVED WOOD.

FROM THE DOUBLE COLLECTION.

extremely well and carefully designed, and are attributed to the close of the thirteenth or commencement of the fourteenth century.

The striking difference between this beautiful production as a work of art, when compared with the commoner decorative painting practised at this period in England and Germany, leads to the inference that in the Middle Ages for the finest decorative work the